

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

Replace the originally-filed drawings with the accompanying new drawings.

The drawings have been amended to improve the enumeration.

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the due consideration given the application. The specification has been amended to add headings, improve the language and to better correspond to the drawing figures. Substitute drawing figures are attached to this paper.

Claims 1-3 and 7-12 are pending in the application. Claims 4-6 are canceled by this amendment. Claims 1-3 have been amended to better set forth the claimed invention. New claims 7-9 recite "preferred" subject matter removed from claims 1 and 2. Claims 10-12 cover additional aspects of the invention. Support for the amended claim set can be found at pages 2-4 of the specification.

The Drawings

The drawings are objected to as containing confusing reference characters. Substitute drawings have been provided in which the enumeration is clear.

The Specification

The specification has been objected to as containing informalities, especially in regards to the reference numerals. The specification has been amended to be free from informalities in light of the instantly submitted drawings.

Rejection Under 35 USC §112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1-6 have been rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Official Action asserts that the claims recite "preferred" embodiments. However, the claims have been amended to set forth the invention in terms that are clear, definite and have full antecedent basis.

This rejection is believed to be overcome, and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

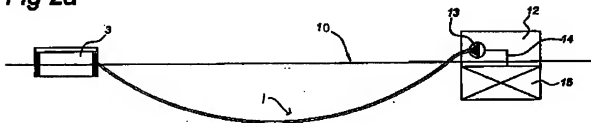
Rejection Under 35 USC §103(a)

Claims 1-6 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over MAYAU et al. (WO 02/44607 A1) in view of LIVELY (U.S. Patent 6,397,895).

The present invention pertains to a method of supplying oil from a first floating structure to an offloading structure. The present invention entails the utilization of a flexible duct where the inner wall of elastomeric material has a wall thickness of between 3 cm and 7 cm (claim 1). This results in the required degree of flexibility of the mid-water transfer hose of the invention connecting the floating structures and prevents wax formation, solidification, or wax forming of the oil, which is detrimental to the operation of the transfer duct and can lead to complete blocking, requiring replacement of the duct.

Flexibility of the hose of the present invention is important in order to bridge the varying positions of the two floating structures due to environmental influences, such as waves, winds and currents. As is shown in figures 2a-2c (Figure 2a is reproduced below), varying curved configurations which provide a length compensation, are provided by the duct of the invention in order to allow the floating structures 3 and 12 to approach or drift away from one another, without creating tensions in the duct.

Fig 2a



In instant claim 1 of the present invention, the curved configuration of the duct extending above the sea bed, has now been explicitly described.

Furthermore, the object of the invention of providing a high throughput at reduced pumping rates is met by providing a single large-diameter duct with a friction reducing layer, such as a nitrile layer, on the inner surface of the elastomeric material. The friction reducing layer helps maintain low pumping pressures when the oil cools down slightly and viscosity is increased during transport.

MAYAU et al. pertain to a connect hose with a connect flange, where a flexible duct 1 extends between two structures. The Official Action refers to LIVELY, which pertains to an insulated steel pipe that can have an optional abrasion resistant layer. However, the combination of MAYAU et al. with LIVELY fails to disclose or infer the combination of elements of claim 1 of the present invention.

The combination of these elements is not taught in MAYAU et al. and cannot be derived from this document in a straight-forward manner. The wall thickness of the elastomeric material is not derivable in a straight-forward manner from tables I and II of LIVELY, as they refer to non-analogous small-diameter steel pipelines of 6" diameter to which insulating layers are provided.

In contrast, the present invention pertains to a flexible duct made of steel-reinforced elastomeric wall material, which in itself provides the mechanical strength, the fluid tightness and the insulating properties of the duct.

As a result, one of ordinary skill in the art would fail to produce claim 1 of the present invention from a knowledge of the teachings of MAYAU et al. and LIVELY. A *prima facie* case of unpatentability has thus not been made. Claims depending upon claim 1 are patentable for at least the above reasons.

These rejections are believed to be overcome, and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

The Examiner is thanked for considering the Information Disclosure Statement filed May 18, 2006 and for making an initialed PTO-1449 Form of record in the application.

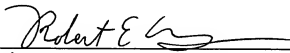
Prior art of record but not utilized is believed to be non-pertinent to the instant claims.

The objections and rejection are believed to be overcome, obviated or rendered moot, and that no issues remain. The Examiner is accordingly respectfully requested to place the application in condition for allowance and to issue a Notice of Allowability.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX:

The Appendix includes the following items:

- Replacement Sheets for Figures 1, 2a-2d and 3 of the drawings